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A PROTOTYPE OF LATIN-AMERICAN MISGOVERNMENT

BY MARRION WILCOX.

DE QUINCEY's "Spirit of Merciful Interpretation" is not always invoked when citizens of different republics in America express their opinions of each other. In the April number of this REVIEW, a writer who discusses the question, "Is the Monroe Doctrine a Bar to Civilization?" and who signs himself "An American Business Man," offers as a target for scorn a people rich in faults, interesting, and surely to be reckoned with. We have not often read an account of the institutions in a majority of the American republics which, at first view, appeared to be more unfavorable; yet the article is undeniably a sincere expression, and if we find it resentful rather than judicial in tone, that may be partly because we cannot forget the writer's obligation as a citizen of that one of the American republics which is naturally and properly expected to be generous on a grand scale, in its judgments as in its dealings,—the United States.

Fortunately, another article in the same number of the REVIEW—the article entitled "A Gallery of Portraits," by Professor Goldwin Smith—may serve to remind us that discouraging conditions, like those which exist in parts of Latin-America, prevailed in England during the long years of the Tudor despotism, which, nevertheless, culminated in the brilliant Elizabethan period. Thus, for example, "An American Business Man" tells us that constitutions and laws in Latin-America are set aside by the decrees of dictators and military despots; that members of the legislatures are not elected in the manner prescribed by the constitution, but are appointed by the dictator and selected to do his bidding. But Professor Goldwin Smith says that, during the reign of Henry VIII., Wolsey tried to rule without Parliaments,

while Thomas Cromwell's policy was to rule through an enslaved Parliament. At the dictation of the Crown, Parliament passed acts "for putting the victims of royal displeasure to death without a trial; it passed an act authorizing the King to repudiate his debts and compelling those who had been paid to refund the payments;" it gave the King's proclamations the force of law, and "enabled a King on reaching the age of twenty-four to cancel acts of Parliament made before his attainment of that age." At Thomas Cromwell's command, the mayor of a town set aside representatives who had been duly elected, appointing others more pleasing to the Crown in their place. A Parliament which passed a repudiation act was packed with the King's servants. The Peers were not less servile than the Commons; while juries were to such a degree servile that the trial of a Crown victim was the mere registration of the decree of death.

A further comparison of passages from the two articles may well be made, if only to cast some merciful doubt upon "An American Business Man's" conclusion, that "there will be no peace in the Western Hemisphere" until "Germany, England and the United States take joint possession and control of all Latin-American countries, except the three previously mentioned [Mexico, Chile, and Argentina], and govern them in the same manner as these nations govern their dependencies." Is it necessary, or has it in the past been customary, to decide that nations are incapable of self-help, and must therefore be taken possession of and governed as dependencies, when their rulers are adjudged guilty of such offences as this writer imputes to the ruling class in South America? Or has this critic, perhaps, discovered conditions which are wholly exceptional and unprecedented? Let us see.

He says:

"There are in these countries many able scholars and fine lawyers, who constitute the material for a creditable judiciary; but, unfortunately, even this department of the government is at the mercy of these brutal, ignorant, corrupt, vicious, and wholly intolerable despots. Lawyers of character and ability are not wanted as judges, and they would fear to accept such positions, if tendered to them."

Professor Goldwin Smith says that the English judiciary of Henry the Eighth's day was at the mercy of a King whom he

characterizes as a "brutal despot and gross voluptuary," "habitually guilty not only of the greatest but of the meanest crimes; of fraud, lying and robbery, as well as of tyranny and judicial murder." Solicitor-General Rich "by the most infamous treachery" procured evidence to be used against Sir Thomas More; and "the King completed the exhibition of his character by seizing the goods of his murdered friend and turning More's widow out of her home." And in this connection we must not overlook Thomas Cromwell, "thorough-paced" villain, who "deliberately set down his criminal intentions in his memorandum book"; who "combined the chicane of the law with the ferocity of a mercenary camp," and, "it is almost needless to add, was corrupt and accumulated wealth by foul means"; whose appearance, we are told, warned the beholder, for nature had bestowed upon him "a small and cruel mouth, an extraordinary long upper lip, and a pair of gray eyes set closely together, and moving restlessly under his light eyebrows."

The military chieftains of Latin-America are charged by their latest critic with outrageous misconduct in their relations with women of the better class. Turning now to Professor Goldwin Smith's article, we read:

"The narrative of the divorce of Henry VIII. from Catherine of Aragon is about as dirty an episode as can be found in history. . . . That conscience had little to do with the matter is surely proved by Henry's whole conduct throughout the affair; by the tricks which he played, the lies which he told, the foul means which he employed to obtain opinion in his favor; by his attempt to steal an important document; above all, by his brutal behavior to his wife in openly installing his mistress as Queen designate at her side. His pretended uneasiness because Catherine of Aragon had been his brother's wife assumes a curious aspect when it is known, as it certainly is, that Anne Boleyn's sister had been his mistress."

While one of these two writers refers to "that high and mighty way which only a Latin-American can emulate," the other speaks of Henry's "arrogant self-esteem." The former deplores the lack of good faith among the southern republics and their citizens; the latter more pointedly declares that in England Lord Rochfort was judicially murdered in order to give color to a "hideous lie," and that "there is reason to believe that Henry even thought of putting his daughter to death for her resolute refusal to betray

her mother's cause." Extortion, also, is one of the themes discussed in both of these articles. "An American Business Man" says: "The extravagant ideas, and consequent demands of the average military Jefe are past belief, and the sums of money he squanders are limited only by his ability to squeeze the English or German merchant." Professor Goldwin Smith observes that the enormous treasure which Henry VII. left to his son was accumulated "largely by chicanery and extortion"; and, of the dissolution of the monasteries by that son's chosen instrument, Thomas Cromwell, he says: "Cromwell's commissioners of inquiry were rogues, whose mission was simply to find warrants for rapine." A small part of the wealth thus confiscated was used in constructing public works, "but far the greatest part was either squandered by Henry himself in court luxury, ostentation, and the gambling to which he was greatly addicted, or lavished on the satellites of the court. . . . Violence, characteristic of marauders rather than of statesmen, marked the whole course of the revolution." Oppressive proceedings on the part of Latin-American "tyrants"—reaching even to imprisonment, confiscation of property, and "insulting and terrifying the family" of any one who stubbornly refuses to be bullied and robbed—are noted by "An American Business Man." Professor Goldwin Smith says that, when attempts to decoy, kidnap, and assassinate Cardinal Pole had failed, "the King had to be content with murdering the Cardinal's aged mother, the Countess of Salisbury, and some of his relatives."

We know that the disorders and the misgovernment characteristic of England at the time under consideration did not strike sixteenth-century critics and observers as being temporary; in fact, now that we can measure the duration of that period, we see that it lasted at least from the battle of Bosworth, in 1485, to the accession of Elizabeth, in 1558. Professor Goldwin Smith would, indeed, extend its limits by an additional seventy years. He says: "The brilliant buccaneering of Henry V. in France [*i. e.*, from 1415] bred in the English aristocracy and people the spirit of violence and rapine which brought on the Wars of the Roses. Exhaustion, prostration, and Tudor despotism were the natural result." In other words, the profound darkness immediately preceding the dawn of modern England had to be endured from 1415 to 1558—that is, for a period longer than the

whole life of the Central and South-American republics, from the winning of their independence to the present day. In England, as in Latin-America, the people of gentle birth, or splendid talents, like Sir Thomas More, were the chief sufferers. "The despotism sedulously decimated and suppressed them, while it brought forward new men, an aristocracy of placemen owing everything to the Crown." The spiritual life of England was regulated by a King "personally steeped in vice and crime"—a pitch of presumption beyond the daring of Latin-American rulers. In the court of Henry VIII., "ambition and greed trampled not only on justice and humanity, but on natural affection." The Earl of Surrey, a poet, "a harbinger of the Elizabethan era," when on trial for his life, found that the chief witness against him was his own sister. The Duke of Norfolk bore "a conspicuous part in the judicial murder of his own niece."

Thus far, we find all the distressing conditions or atrocities in Latin-America, as "An American Business Man" views them, matched or outdone in Professor Goldwin Smith's comments on a gallery of English portraits; but in one respect the censor of abuses in England under the Tudors is left far behind. There is nothing else in either article so calculated to harrow the feelings of American readers as the following statements that the "American Business Man" makes about American consuls: If a traveler, he says, "appeals to the American consul for aid [when suffering from the tyranny of some unspecified Latin-American government], the chances are *seven to one* that the mouth of that dignitary has long been stopped by government concessions, or that he is an actual party to the intrigues." Again: "The mouths of most American consuls are stopped by one species of favoritism or another, usually in the form of worthless government concessions; and the chief occupation of many of these worthies is, apparently, to palm off such green goods on those of their countrymen who come within the sphere of their influence." "The military Jefe knows that, whatever atrocities he may commit, there will be no mention made of them in Washington," because the American consuls have been bribed to withhold information.

Seven arrant knaves to one honest man among these representatives of our Department of State! The proportion of rascality is so unexpectedly large that we should consider the "seven" a mere figure of speech, were it not practically repeated or empha-

sized in several other passages. We are obliged to conclude that this assertion is entitled to equal credit with the writer's allegations of gross misconduct on the part of the natives of those countries—or, rather, on the part of a class which, he says, does not comprise more than ten per cent. of the total population of any Latin-American country.

For ninety per cent. of the inhabitants of the South and Central-American republics, "An American Business man" has only words of praise. The Spaniards of pure blood, he says, "as a class, are cultured, highly civilized, religious, hospitable, many of them of literary attainments and scholarly pursuits. . . . They do not take any part in politics, nor desire positions under the government." The peons, laborers, small traders, cattle-men, fishermen, woodsmen, mechanics—or perhaps more than eighty per cent. of the total population, "as a rule, are exceedingly simple-minded, honest, kind-hearted peasants, fairly industrious, and much more intelligent than the peonage [peasantry?] of most other countries. They dread war, take to the woods at the slightest intimation of trouble, have nothing to do with politics, and pray to be left alone to live in peace. In habits these people are simple, in manners polite and hospitable, and but little drunkenness and crime are found among them. They are the most docile and easily managed people in the world." The pure Indians, though, in fact, they outnumber all other elements in some Central-American states, he dismisses as "unimportant" (because at the moment he is thinking only of South America), and then he attacks the remaining ten per cent., "the ruling class," the class that "makes all the trouble, is responsible for the rapine, bloodshed, murders, revolutions and anarchy, which have so long disgraced Latin-America." Such is his remarkable assertion.

Bitter in the extreme is his characterization of the trouble-makers:

"This class, as a rule, represents a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood, oftentimes with a heavy sprinkling of negro, and sometimes of other elements. He who originated the formula for the composition of this class must have laughed grimly when he finished his work; for one might study chemistry for a thousand years without being able to devise such an atrocious composition. . . . It is of this class that the so-called 'governments' of these countries are formed."

We learn, therefore, that a relatively small number of adventurers, in control of the political machinery, occasioned the resentment which "An American Business Man" has so forcibly expressed. According to his own figures and his description of social classes, nine-tenths of the people of Latin-America are worthy of respect, the aristocracy and the peasantry being, each in its way, rather ideal; for he evidently thinks them singularly free from the worst faults of the corresponding classes in Europe.

We need not inquire at present whether this tribute is wholly or but in part deserved, the important fact being that it is actually offered by one who "has spent much of the last ten years in South America." Let us welcome the favorable admissions of such a competent witness, and keep them in mind while considering his chief generalizations.

First, he does not think that "our brethren" of Latin-America are "animated by high ambitions and noble resolves, struggling upward like ourselves." True: they are not struggling upward exactly like ourselves, for they are in an earlier stage of social evolution. The difficulties which beset them are much greater; their unpreparedness is more noticeable than was our own, even during the early decades of our existence as an independent nation. But the very harshest judgment that any one of us could be justified in passing upon them would be to the effect that their ambitions, resolves, and struggles are like those of our English ancestors in the period of transition between the Middle Ages and modern times. If the mediæval misconduct of the ruling class is much more in evidence than the progress of the mass of the people, surely a student of history should not fail to make due allowance for the latter, any more than he hesitates to denounce the former. When we read in the criticism now before us that "the travesty on government" in Latin-American countries appears to be a permanent evil, rather than a product of abnormal and temporary conditions, we reflect that the struggle often seemed hopeless in England also; and yet, after the peaceful accession of Elizabeth, right soon there began a brilliant period which produced the finest flowers of English genius. It is not necessary to assume that the evolutionary process transforming social conditions in Latin-America will be intolerably long. Even an exasperated censor admits that an uncommonly large percentage of the people have virtues which, it seems to us,

make the outlook fairly encouraging. Mediævalism in government may be replaced by modern regularity in the administration of the affairs of the republics, since the latter condition is desired by nine-tenths of their people. The writer also admits that progress in this respect has reached a satisfactory point in Mexico, Chile, and Argentina. We ask: Is Costa Rica so far behind? Has not Cuba given proof that she possesses elements of stability, with not a little talent for self-government? Now, why may not the more backward republics be expected to advance in their turn?

A fact never to be ignored by any student of Latin-American politics is this: The Central and South-American states were not founded by industrial communities or peaceful settlers, such as formed the colonies in North America, but by conquerors (*conquistadores*), warlike adventurers who sailed from the Iberian peninsula to despoil the New World, precisely in that rough period when Henry VII. of England was accumulating a treasure of £2,000,000 by extortion. The friends of Latin-America in the United States may be allowed to extract some comfort from the reflection that the abuses which exist are not a vigorous new growth, but belong to the old order of things destined to pass away; that the characteristic faults of the sixteenth-century conquerors and rulers have been perpetuated by a limited class only, and only in those republics which are oppressed by political adventurers as the colonies from which they sprang were oppressed by viceroys and governors sent from Europe. But a Pedrarias Davila is not to be found among these persons who "make all the trouble." We realize the improvement that has taken place when we contrast widely separated periods in the history of the same regions; and it is quite certain that in recent years progress, in nearly all parts of South and Central America, has been decidedly more rapid than ever before, as a result of the pressure of public opinion at home and abroad, which grows stronger every year with the increase of immigration and the extension of commercial relations.

Second, "An American Business Man" says: "The intelligent observer discovers that he is outside the bounds of civilization . . . within forty-eight hours after setting foot on the soil of any Latin-American country, with the exception of Mexico, Chile, and the Argentine Republic." But let us suppose the

subject of the intelligent observer's comments to be any one of the countries of Europe which stand as exponents of civilization: would it be permissible for him to praise the aristocracy and peasantry of France, England, or Germany in qualified terms such as "An American Business Man" applies to the peons and Spaniards of pure blood in South America, with no imputation of degeneracy in the upper class or of brutalization among the lower orders? Could he say of a "civilized" nation that "*all* the trouble" was made by a small fraction of the population, while nine-tenths were "cultured, religious, hospitable," or "honest, kind-hearted, intelligent, polite, comparatively free from drunkenness and crime—the most docile and easily managed people in the world"? We do not wish to bear unduly upon this point; but is it proper to speak of people who are made the subjects of such commendation as being "outside the bounds of civilization"? The inhabitants of those countries which are least progressive, submitting to the misrule of bullies (who are, after all, but a sixteenth-century variant of our own political "bosses"), although the remedy is in their own hands and clearly indicated in their national constitutions, certainly will be held responsible for weak acquiescence in evil conditions if they permit wrongdoing to continue; but it is as unfair to judge of all Latin-America from unworthy officials in the least fortunate states as it would be for Latin-America to judge of the United States from our consuls—if the latter have not been maligned.

Third, "An American Business Man" thinks that the United States condemns the great continent of South America to "*everlasting* barbarism" by refusing to allow the European Powers to encroach upon its territory, or to acquire such control of any part of it as would in its effect be equal to territorial aggrandizement. Our government, he asserts, is "*the confrère* of thieves and brigands," thanks to the Monroe Doctrine: we must either police all of Latin-America ourselves (such is the offensive suggestion actually made), or, as the sole alternative, act in conjunction with Germany and England, taking "joint possession and control" of sovereign states which are now engaged in the very difficult but not hopeless task of working out their own salvation. Suggestions of this nature offer the narrow prejudice of race, or sordid commercial aims, as substitutes for the divine plan, in accordance with which many different types of mankind have been evolved,

each with its peculiar merits and defects, so that humanity should in the end profit by the contributions of these distinct elements, gaining enormously, incalculably more through a separate development of the genius of each race—its physical type, its social institutions—than could be secured by the way of premature amalgamation or uniformity imposed by force.

Hitherto, we have endeavored to assume "An American Business Man's" point of view, in order to show that even the acceptance of his premises would not drive us to acceptance of his depressing conclusions—conclusions stated, not substantiated. Now, finally, it is a pleasure to be able to present the testimony of other competent witnesses who hold opinions very much more favorable than those which he expresses in regard to (1) the ruling class, (2) the extent of the revolutionary areas, and (3) the recent progressive movement in Latin-American communities.

The addresses delivered at the sessions of the annual meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, held in Philadelphia on April 17th and 18th, gave the views of specialists on the subject of our relations with Latin-America.

Mr. W. I. Buchanan, formerly Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to the Argentine Republic, said:

"The ideas, aspirations, and hopes for the future of those countries are as high and as sincere as are those of any of us in regard to our own. Great progress has been made in each of them. There is in each a strong and steadily increasing element of men of high ideals, character, and honesty, desiring only peace, tranquillity, and good order within their country, and the development of its lands, mines, and industries, and the upbuilding of its people. . . . Some day immigration to our country will cease. Before that day arrives it will set in toward South and Central America, and with that current of people and capital all the internal troubles and financial difficulties which have beset and still weigh down the republics therein will be carried into history, and the material and intellectual development now in progress there will receive an impetus that will not only be lasting, but a realization as well of the efforts and faith of their public men, who have so patiently and under such great disadvantages labored to that end."

An officer of high rank in the army of the United States, who is well informed in regard to the West Indies, said:

"The Spanish-Americans are a strong and progressive race, and under free commercial exchange with the United States will become just as prosperous as any other in the whole world."

Señor Calderon, the Peruvian Minister, asserted that the majority of the republics of South America "live at peace." As for his own country, he was able to say that "revolutions belong to the past"; that "order is an accomplished fact, the Presidents being legally elected, and succeeding each other with the regularity ordained by the constitution." But Peru was the seat of the Spanish viceroyalty exercising authority in a vast region below the equator; it was a centre and the last stronghold of Spanish power. Accepting with hearty good-will this assurance from Peru, we are certainly justified in saying that the limits of the revolutionary area are contracting.

The director of the International Bureau of American Republics, Mr. W. W. Rockhill, summarized the work of the recent International Conference held at the city of Mexico:

"The subject of arbitration naturally received a great share of the attention of the Conference, with the result that the Hague convention received unanimous acceptance on the part of the nineteen republics represented. . . . A treaty was also signed for the compulsory arbitration of pecuniary claims. . . . The Inter-continental Railway project was further advanced. . . . Closer commercial intercourse between the various states was promoted. . . . The subjects of quarantine and sanitation were advanced. . . . An international commission was appointed for the study of the crisis in the coffee industry. Other conventions were signed, providing for the reciprocal recognition of the diplomas and titles granted in the several republics; the international recognition of literary and artistic copyrights; the exchange of official, scientific, literary, and industrial publications."

In what other part of the world would the discussion of matters in which national interests are deeply involved range about themes of international helpfulness?

"Outside the bounds of civilization" is an excellent phrase, and in a wholly new sense it fits the list of subjects just quoted,—in the sense, namely, that civilization of the older type, even European civilization, has not yet extended so far as to include all of these themes.

MARRION WILCOX.